

IN MEMORY
OF
THOSE WHO FOUGHT
1940-1945

BY
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ON THE VERGE OF BEING DRAFTED

A voice sounded throughout the camp:

Boys, line up for the battle, otherwise we will be forever late.

The budding members of our armed forces are emerging to serve the nation, to build and fortify our positions at the time of world crisis.

The families of the Galilee have already sent their sons to the Northern front, and the families of the valleys have girded their loins and they are headed to defend the South.

In the distance, somewhere on the Nile River and on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, our legions are battling the diabolical foe.

Truth will always prevail for us and the World. The hope of two thousand years will become a reality, and it depends on us alone.

(Written in Tirat Shalom, 2 Tammuz, 1940)

HELLO TO YOU MY LITTLE COUNTRY

Hello to you, you are my little country.

Our country, you are the land of our birth.

We traveled great distances from afar in order to renew your shield and crown.

For days, weeks, and months we traveled up to you with difficulty on broken ships and boats, in order to glance up at your face.

Desert lands here and there were transformed into a blossoming Garden of Eden.

Those of the wounded and had no hope for their future were ready to find here tranquility for their souls.

Our land, The Land of Israel, belongs to us and her borders are far from here.

To ensure and establish a home for us, we will not ask at this time where we may go.

Indeed, you, the Jewish settlers of Israel, please do not forget us, and that which is concealed from us will be established and children will return home.

(Written on the Israel-Egypt train, 7 Cheshvan 1941)

IN THE DESERT

Somewhere in the desert, in an unpopulated land of wilderness and desolation, Israel is dry.

Nights of bombs, storm and endless raging winds and we are inactive.

The outpouring of the soul, full of rage and expressing the feelings of each one of us will be heard because we did not abandon the country in order to rest.

Those in the distance observed us without end, as we stood on the high ground of our camp.

They were not guards of fortifications or towers, but the defenders of the Homeland were taken to the desert.

Cries of despair and mourning were occasionally heard. Is that what we, the legions of Israel hoped for?

This time, is it our last? We have merited the war of justice, the war of the Twentieth Century with military might.

Give weapons and ammunitions. We are exhausted from sitting, because this time the strength will come from the sword!

(Written somewhere in the Desert, 26 Cheshvan 1941)

IN THE GRAVE

At the foot of the bordering mountain in the West in a grave open to the wind from all sides, a deep sleep will silence the one who is dressed in a uniform with ready weapons.

His uniform has empty bullet casings, and he only has a shovel and an ax with which to dig.

There is a buzzing noise surrounding him. And there are armed legions with heavy cannons.

When airplanes fly above, he will put his head below and remain asleep until dawn.

And when the many weapons of the evil conspiracy will loudly fly above, this trembling scene will disappear.

They will advance or retreat as one here or there to disappear for fear of Heaven.

Roads and lanes filled with armies are curving in the distant horizon. In the evening, at sunset, the horizon will illuminate the face of Hell.

Caravans of hundreds and thousands of tanks and trucks will travel on the roads, and facing us a huge army numbering like the stars in the sky will appear under heaven.

When he will lift his head above the grave he feels a link to Hell
as in a dream.

Here and there an airfield is created and a new army base is
established next to it.

And an endless number of soldiers continue to wander, to pass
and to flow.

(Written somewhere in the desert, 2 Sivan, 1941)

POETRY

Poetry is my life's purpose, it disappears and eludes me. I want to cry or mourn as if everything around me empties out.

To tell, to correct, to add, to lament, to bless and to sing; and all of it with a blocked heart from which nothing can leave.

It is not minor aggravation for you when you have no friend or no outlet, when there is no condolence for troubles that continue and multiply.

Write! Add a word to a poem, to a rhyme, to a section, and when it is not calm reread it to become calm.

(Written in Solom, 12 Tevet, 1941)

POETRY AND ME

We are both together and I am not alone. There is a language and an idea in my heart.

And when the right word will tarry, a poetic and flowery phrase will help the matter.

For me: The substance of the poem gets shorter and the faulty expressions stop.

Therefore: I will select this path for me even if it is hard labor.

(Written in Solom, 18 Tevet, 1941)

A PRAYER FOR THE PILOT

Donate one more night of my sleep, as my friends and I are tired from work.

The victims who are doing nothing in a dark room are ready. Just come and drop!

Cast your thousands of bullets but do not leave us wounded and handicapped.

Your bravery is already known afar, as my ruined home will testify.

For woe is to the trampled refugees. Everyone will thank you the hero, the pilot.

Yesterday we all saw you as miraculous when you cast bombs over our heads.

You managed to put on a good show when you escaped the gunfire of the ships.

And when you returned here after a brief fly around, you became the "Hero of The Day" above all.

(Written at Solom, 3 Shevat, 1941)

THE MINE IN THE WATER

Your waves are furious, unlike those of yesterday or the day before yesterday, for you have buried tens of corpses.

You are silent and your waters are at rest. Is your strength at war to cut off life?

At dawn you swallowed a mine within your depths without raising it or revealing it to the people around you.

And at one bright noon, and visible to all, you dared to spit up onto the sands those who had drowned.

Next to these deep waters during times of peace, widows will cry at this very place.

Women, old people and children will lament forever over this strange death.

(Written at Solom, 7 Shevat, 1941)

THE WAR

Water, sky and double blue, heaven, sea, and between them there is a world. In the large wide handbreadth of the world the massacre reached up to the heart of the sky.

Stoning, burning, murder and strangulation occurred by the will of men without righteousness and justice.

And the heavens will jump and the waters will churn because of the evil raging below.

Cruising planes will be cast to the depths of raging stormy seas.

And unto their waters will be sent bombs of poison and fire, as well as mines and hatred.

And when people will dwell peacefully in their tents, sitting under fig trees and grapevines, airplanes will rain down Sulphur as though it was heavenly rain.

And fishermen living on their boats will sail to the distance they will be drowned with their boats unto the depths by the mines in the sea.

Yet when justice will prevail man's situation will improve, people will no longer perform evil acts in the world.

(Written at Solom, 8 Shevat, 1941)

THE LONESOME BOAT

There was once a lonesome boat that dwelt alone in the bay. She was transported from afar and here her glory was diminished. She was brought via a circuitous route on the Mediterranean Sea, from Brindisi to Solon, so as not to be revealed to the enemy.

Amongst her friends she is singularly special, and she sent regards to her soldiers, taking them to faraway places, to the desert, to distant continents, some by boat and some by camel.

With letters, mail, cigarettes, newspapers, stamps, paper and children's photos she carries a blessing and encouragement to many and regards to thousands from the African Continent.

This weak boat struggled hard to survive and reach the shore to meet those who summoned her. She struggled and lost. She was broken and shattered. Her sailors were robbed and their lives were snuffed out.

Captives were exiled, her emblems were taken down and she stands here and laments: Woe, alas, the letters went to the pirates, shame on you!

If your lives are still in your hands, or you have been drowned at sea, or buried in the ground, or you have been obliterated, awaken and save your honor.

(Written at Solom, 14 Shevat, 1941)

LOST IN THE DESERT

The camel and the lamb are grazing in the desert, like the ox grazes until all is eaten. It has been tens of days since their owners were exiled from here and the remaining livestock knows not to where.

They wander like a flock with no shepherd, the camel and the lamb together. They know not to fight with one another at this time because of the noise and their fear.

Those who ate beef now eat only crackers and jam which repeat on them.

It has been a month since they had living quarters, and they now have no roof or cover for their heads.

They are lost and wander with no consolation. Their souls are filled with longing for their masters and for tranquility.

(Written at Solom-Tobruk, 16 Shevat, 1941)

DIGGING IN

As the strength is spent with back-breaking work, with courage and with spirit, with waves of bent knees in ports and on ships, at water factories and buildings, with pick axes and spades and in the rest of the conquered lands, this is our work. What do we get out of it?

(Written at Tobruk, 26 Shevat, 1941)

BOOM

Boom! Without panic the bomb fell into the sea. Soldiers on boats were not injured. Is it luck, or is it His wish? Was it really intended to bomb us, or simply to observe what would occur?

There were only three enemy aircraft, making continuously loud noises in the world with no end. Their strength is in mines from below, and bombs that are in the belly of the planes are deployed at their will.

They also dropped three bombs, two in the sea and one more...

It is on fire, burning everything around, destruction! There is fear to peek and look at them. The two ships facing me at sea were bombed and the water swallowed them. And the waters were turbulent for a while as they sank.

They were shot at by machine guns and canons on ships as they sank. While this took place silver colored airplanes that tried to hide became revealed to the defenders, by the flashes of light like spotlights generated by the exploding bombs, revealing the bombers' positions.

I swear that it's a miracle! It is a show of crossing rainbow lights. The bombers continue to hide their positions when they deploy the bombs behind them as they fly. Fly lower. Approach the target near the port. We are down here and we are all like

ants in shelters and coverings. Some are under a box or a chest and others are deathly ill, struggling with anger and cunning, but one out of three friends was harmed. When they were caught in the lights they did not attempt to escape because they knew there was no other outlet.

His belly was cracked open and the echo sound of his sinking was heard, caught in fire, still burning on earth.

(Written at Tobruk, 27 Shevat, 1941)

TO THE JEWS OF TOBRUK

To where, to where did you flee, you, honorable Jews of the town? My soldiers do not impose fear of racist legislation. They fight for rights and freedom.

We came to bring you salvation, to free you of the burden. You will forget your problem forever. You will have redemption and salvation.

Your destruction you left behind but we will not express shame. We have appointed guards for your places of religious study. No defiled leg has stepped in your holy places and no harm was intended. We kept an eye on everything, and everything will be guarded until the following day.

(Written at Tobruk, 3 Adar, 1941)

CLAP CLAP

Clap Clap without a break and without an end. Without thinking what is the sacrifice and what is the gift.

Clap clap equipment and food without starving. Meat is to satiate and enemy is to chase away.

Just continue higher and higher to invade. Let the sun in Giv'on stand still. Conquer it and lay siege to it until you annihilate them.

Act, march, fight and conquer until the end of time, until his blood will be silent and his name will be forever erased.

(Written at Tobruk, 4 Adar, 1941)

THE MONUMENT IN THE SEA

Tears were shed at the seashore of the Diaspora over the loss of the first victims of the army unit. Those sank in the water, and their bodies were plucked as the fire began on the ship in the heart of the sea, without a savior or a miracle.

They drowned and sank. They burned alive in Hell. No tombstones will be erected. Only the water will be their witness.

(Written at Tobruk, 2 Adar, 1941)

GREECE

I am jealous of your past and I will be blessed with your heroes.

You are small like we are and your independence is presently in jeopardy.

Ancient woes are upon us and upon you. Not even once was either of us jealous of one another's troubled destinies.

The destruction of Acropolis gave you strength and we have Jerusalem which gives us hope that is not in vain.

The picturesque ruins of Acropolis should be blessed because even we have our wellsprings of salvation.

Heroes and heroism are symbols of mighty victories for great nations.

Our sons, like your sons, possess courage and heroism because they understand the holiness of sacrificing for the nation.

For many of us, solidarity matters, not independence by itself. We therefore pave the way with fallen soldiers in absence and in a nation.

(Written in Athens, 29 Adar, 1941)

SOCRATES

You, you are the prostitutes. You sanctified the street by posting the name of Socrates on your sign, and then you introduced vulgarity.

Those who yearned for dress, are presently waiting in lines of troop of soldiers. For many months they saw no woman, yet they blessed one another in her name from the time they were in the desert until now.

This woman is a prostitute by profession. Her body is given to all in exchange for a lira or a drachma.

Is that honorable? Are you truly Socrates? Will every prostitute bless herself in your name?

(Written in Athens, 4 Nisan, 1941)

MOTHER

If I forget you, dear Mother, I will have sinned. You nurtured and educated a war sacrifice.

In place of comfort I will bring you grief by not sending a letter or my regards.

Know that I am not alone. I have a large family and all of us remember you as you are, Mother.

And there you are, in a distance, thinking and waiting. Who knows if the time has already come?

To return home to hug and kiss you and tell you everything and lighten your heart

It will arrive, the big day will come, and all of us will cheer with the crown of victory.

(Written in Athens, Eve of Passover, 1941)

WHY?

Daily, morning and evening, who knows if it is sometimes or it is endless? You are beaten, you suffer, my homeland. You are always left lying in danger.

Who knows? Maybe your destructions multiply, and perhaps strangers are going wild within you.

Why did we abandon you? Why didn't you hold your sons back, as you are a heroic mother?

We were placed to guard borders of strangers, and there you are, guarded by foreigners.

Watch out for your borders in our absence. Do you feel security without your sons?

Your sin shall be large, and our pain shall be great if we do not quickly return to the borders of our land.

(Written in Athens, 15 Nisan, 1941)

THE BIBLE

The Bible is a helpful friend; wherever I go I will not neglect it. When I sail in the sea I will hide it in my life-saving belt and if I walk wearing my uniform I will place it in my pocket.

Without it I am neither a Jew nor a soldier. It is my teacher in peace and in war. From it I will learn the elements of battle and understanding. In it is the wisdom for every person, big and small.

(Written in Athens, 2nd intermediary day of Passover, 1941)

A DAY OF REVENGE

We will soon prepare for a day of revenge for (military) evil dreamers. Now we have a lot of strength and salvation.

Your wings will be clipped, your bellies will be split and you will be attacked by noise and fear.

For every strike you will be repaid or even paid twofold, and with our full strength, even sevenfold.

If your caves are overrun your souls will be in the hands of strangers. You will not be saved. This time you are boxed in.

Your protective fronts are shattered. Time has come that they cannot be relied upon.

We will starve you, you who are gluttonous. You shall forget animal sacrifice when you bring people to be butchered.

It is justified revenge, a moral lesson for the future for the other military evil dreamers like you.

(Written in Athens, fourth intermediary day of Passover, 1941)

THE CAPTIVES ARE IN OUR HANDS

Torn, dressed in rags and starving for bread in the desert wilderness they shall walk. Who will glance upon that flock of captives?

Who saw them coming down from the mountain, looking from afar like ants? They were exhausted, tired and with broken spirit, resembling Egyptian slaves.

Thousands of them filled the entire sea. One guard for one thousand captives is enough. Where can they escape to?

We are not cruel like you. Now you are resting in prison camps. You can enjoy the rest now until the designated time comes.

This is a period of shame for all your neighbors and freedom for the world and all its inhabitants. Isn't this the goal of our battles, for humanity and for the whole world?

(Written in Solom, 5 Shevat, 1941)

THEY WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

These things will not be forgotten. Surely they are moral lessons for children. How did six young Jewish men who were prisoners of war escape?

How many distances that one may walk on the Sabbath from the City of Belgrade did this event occur, as these brave young men jumped from the boxcar window, one after another?

At first, glance it was a vision as the boxcars travelled at full speed. With one desire in their hearts they jumped out, one by one.

Freedom is the intent of the escapees, to attain it rapidly. It is bad enough, the depression of captivity, and in addition, the ground is also burning.

The danger of dying is clear for everyone, the labor is certainly dangerous, and the situation would be even worse if we would be caught by the secret police.

I will feel the joy and sadness when I see this. Surely tomorrow I will get my regular dose, receiving many lashes.

On a dark, rainy and windy night the guard will doze off on his watch, and then you, my friends, have a safe journey, freedom and liberty.

(Written in captivity on the way to Austria, 11 Av, 1941)

YEARNING

Vegetation, grass and this dew remind me now how my friends in yonder fields are reminded of us captives.

Sometimes, as we sat on padded seats, we wouldn't have believed that in one night the destiny of the village people would change so much.

And at this moment, as we sit with folded hands, we are permitted to only glance at the nice view of nature that is rich and flourishing.

The richness of this view of nature reminds me of the Galilee, with the sound of the flowing brooks and the tune of the recorder.

For how long must we be exiled in captivity? I want to be home in my land, to continue plowing the field.

(Written in captivity in Darnsbach, 23 Tammuz, 1941)

BREAD

Bread, bread, bread is the only purpose for those in the camp,
for all the war prisoners.

Stale bread doesn't bother us. Just bring it here so we can
forget starvation and calm the belly.

(Written in captivity in Solniki, 28 Sivan, 1941)

THE CHANUKA CANDLES

There were days during vacation when the holiday gave us rest to celebrate to remember, to enjoy, and to raise the flames of Chanukah.

We tried to tell of our difficult past, to recall the hindrances of past generations. We wanted to compare past and present, since the past was not merely imagined; it was a symbol for us.

Historically, the lights of Chanukah were extinguished. They forbade us to raise the symbol of Chanukah. Their intent was for us to forget and erase the Festival of Chanukah, since they remembered that it is strength, courage and hope for us.

For us, lights overcome situations. The conditions of the future depend upon these candles that scatter the light. For us, Chanukah will not be forgotten. At every occasion her symbol will be blessed, Chanukah for heroes, soldiers and the brave.

For the fighters at the front, wherever they may be, candles and torches are lit. Even in the fields of combat, under fire, the candle will not evade anyone.

Even in captivity, within the fence there are feelings of glory and splendor for the Maccabee heroes and for the legions that will come.

(Written in captivity in Ehren Forst, Chanukah, 1942)

A BROTHERLY VOW

We will not interrupt your sleep because our sorrow is not yours. Here in our grave we have already had much tranquility.

We will not visit you in a dream and we will not appear in your imagination because fear will overtake you when see us dead.

We have engraved a letter to send to you and to read to you before redemption comes:

Thank you very much, friends, I applaud you for not forgetting to support the living dead!

Am I not alive? Am I not amongst you? I am certainly with you; I am alive!

We are grateful for the seeds you have sown. You have filled us with the breath of life.

If it was a memento for my family, then you have done enough.

You have planted a memorial tree of life in my name.

It is a destroyed tree with severed branches, for in fact at its very beginning its life was ended.

We quickly arrived here in Hell, without our having seen enough to become satiated.

The ones who rise and return to life will benefit from the outcome of our struggle in the war.

I don't care if I am gone. I am a son of a family. The essence is not my being, but that of the land! The nation!

Just succeed (Israel), as mothers were created for your success, and sons were born to protect you (Israel).

Farewell to you, our dear friends, and please do not shed tears on the graves.

We are not consoled by tears. Abandon the thoughts of the time of our captivity. Do you think we will rot in our graves when you return to the land?

No! The day will come when we will call forth the vow of brothers, and you will raise our bones and we will be redeemed!

(Written in captivity in Malafna, 20 Tammuz, 1944)